



Remarks Prepared For Delivery

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Thank you, it's such a pleasure to be here with all of you today.

Thank you for that very kind introduction. I'd also like to thank Juan [Torrico] and Luis [Borunda] for putting together this great symposium – and for inviting me to be a part of it.

It's great to be here with so many young entrepreneurs of today. You are the successful business owners of tomorrow. I'm very excited to see that you are already expressing your interest in entrepreneurship at this important time in your life.

I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about my experiences in business. I hope that I can share some valuable lessons with all of you...lessons that I've learned from my many years in the private sector and from my time in government service.

And I'd like to start with my first exposure to business.

Growing up, I was always drawn to the business world. Just like many of you, family members were my earliest role models. I learned about entrepreneurship from my paternal grandmother in Mexico, whom I visited in the summers. I was amazed how she made her living by selling goods from her home after my grandfather passed away.

Grandma taught me the meaning of optimism, of determination, and of that wonderful phrase “true grit.”

That stuck with me. Through my almost 30 years at UPS to when I came to the SBA in 2006, I have treasured her lessons.

At an event like this, I think it’s appropriate to reflect on what it means to be a Hispanic, and in my case a woman, in business.

It means many things to me: determination, hard work, accomplishment. It also means seeing opportunities where others might see only challenges.

When I came to UPS, I had no idea what happened there beyond the package-sorting operation. But I was an expert at coping with change -- especially adjusting to my new family life as a divorced mother with a young daughter to care for.

But I had many things going for me: I was young, I was a woman, I was Hispanic, and I was highly motivated.

At the time, I was also continuing my education. And this brings me to my first piece of advice for you: Your education is an invaluable asset, but not just because you need it to succeed.

Learning is enlightening, and continuous education is really about expanding the capacity of the individual. It prepares you to succeed, but also to enjoy life's journey.

Getting the most out of your education does take commitment, especially when you have so much else to focus on. But education is an opportunity.

The 18th century Englishman, Samuel Johnson said, "When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." To this, I would add, "When a single Mom knows there are bills to be paid...and meals to be made...and clothes to be washed...and professional and academic aspirations to be pursued...it concentrates her mind wonderfully."

When I joined UPS in 1976, it didn't take long to recognize the company's diverse climate. Early on, I discovered role models within UPS. Managers and supervisors I worked for unknowingly were my mentors as I emulated their strengths and best management practices.

And this is my second piece of advice for you: develop relationships and find mentors. The relationships will stay with you. And your mentors will help you grow, develop, and learn how to succeed.

Nearly all of UPS's top management team today started at the bottom, in jobs like I had, working part-time as a hub clerk, handling packages. Thanks to UPS's longstanding promotion policy, I was inspired to succeed. I believed that if I applied myself, worked to continuously improve, both academically and professionally, anything was possible.

I'm standing here today as proof of that.

In 2000, I was named President of UPS in Latin America and the Caribbean. I was the first Hispanic woman to rise to that level in the company. Three years later I was asked to take over the company's Air Operations in Louisville.

When I had the opportunity in 2006 to join the Bush Administration, I was excited at the prospect of public service. I was eager to give something back.

And I was particularly excited about working at the SBA – an agency with the noble mission of empowering America's entrepreneurs.

The SBA today is doing great work to support all entrepreneurs as they work to make their small business visions a reality. I'm excited every day to be a part of it.

Entrepreneurship is such a powerful force in our country today, and plays a vital role in driving our economy. It's crucial we help you, the next generation of entrepreneurs, as you start on your way.

Today, our economy is increasingly a small business economy. Small businesses are leading the way in creating jobs, and they are also a critical part of our economic growth.

Dreaming big and taking risk to realize those dreams is part of who we are.

Small business owners are also a part of a force that fuels much of our country's greatness. 25 million small businesses combine to drive our economic engine and to keep it vibrant, adaptable, and competitive. And it is also a force that can open opportunities for all Americans.

Entrepreneurship is important for another reason. It is a proven way to stand on your hard work and dedication, and achieve your professional aspirations.

I'd like to share with you something that President Bush said:

"Small business ownership is a great equalizer in America. The only connections you need are happy customers, [and] a good business plan.

The only credentials you need are good products. The only values you need [are] to be willing to take risks and to work hard.”

The President is absolutely right. Anyone can become a successful small business owner. All you need to do is to work hard...see opportunities...focus on your education...and find mentors.

When I think back on my educational experience and my career experience, one of the things that really stands out to me is how important and how rewarding it is to develop relationships. As I learned, role models and mentors can enable you to succeed. And the relationships you develop will be with you for life.

In closing, I urge you to find opportunities in situations that at first look like challenges. Like education and relationships, the ability to see opportunities can really enable you to succeed.

If you are determined, work hard, and look for ways to continuously improve academically and professionally, I know that you too will realize that anything is possible.

I wish you all success over the next few days of the symposium, and throughout your careers.

Thank you again for having me.